

Mate-

237 rials which could well be made use of, such as
skin, bone, and shell, are hardly used at all.
[989] Putnam claims that they are not used in his
area, although he writes that sometimes the
Pygmies wear horn charms borrowed or stolen
from the villagers. Virtually no use other than
magical is made of bone, horn, or shell, as far
as one can tell from reports from any part of the
Ituri. Among the archers there are few of the
skin quivers and bow covers mentioned by
Schebesta (1952, 124). Putnam (MS) further
states that he has never known these Pygmies
to skin game; they cook and eat the skin as well
as the flesh.

237 Schebesta (1952, 124), however, writes that
411 hide quivers are plentiful, particularly in the
western part of the forest, less so among the
archers in the east, where arrows are always
carried in a bundle held in the left hand.
Schebesta (1952, 124) also mentions the wrist
protector, made of monkey skin, used by
237 archers. He makes other reference to the use of
[291] skin as belts and for adornment and, occasion-
[301] ally, the use of the skin of a Colobus monkey to
[184] cover the back, but he does not specify to which
Mbuti his remarks apply. We assume that, un-
less he specifies otherwise, he refers to the arch-
ers among whom he worked on his second trip.

(P. 165-B)

[ARCHERS]

There are different types of knives, some hafted, some unhafted, always worn in the belt by women and used for preparing food and for sharpening the pointed sticks used by them in both gathering activities and in cooking. Other items that might be found in or around an Efe archer hut include hunting equipment, such as a bow and quiver of arrows (Figs. 6-9), a dog bell (Fig. 7i), an ax for cutting small saplings and sometimes used in the search for honey, an ivory or wooden beater for barkcloth, clay pipe bowls (Fig. 5), hide slings for carrying children, and a few personal possessions such as hunting charms. Of exceptional interest, perhaps, is the basketry press (Fig. 11), used among the archers for extraction of juice from fruits.

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DRESS AND ORNAMENTATION

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Clothing consists mainly of barkcloth worn tucked between the legs. The upper part of the body is rarely covered, and then only by a skin cape worn over the shoulders by old men. Basketry caps are worn by men, and sometimes fur bands which may also be worn on the arm. Schebesta also mentions bracelets of shredded bark. Both men and women may wear, around the upper arm or wrist, fiber cords to which small pieces of wood, teeth, and other charms are attached. Leaves, flowers, nuts, and feathers

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[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 168-B]

[ARCHERS]

[P.174-B]



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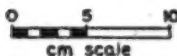


FIG. 11. Fruit press, archers, Kilo District, East Ituri. An unusual utensil, found in the hunting camp of an eastern archer band, used for extracting juice.

GATHERING

Meat, however, forms only about 30 per cent of the diet (Schebesta, 1941, 11). The archers' staple is essentially vegetarian, and this is provided almost exclusively by women. First place goes to the plantains, sweet potatoes, and peanuts acquired from the villagers in return for meat or service. But the forest itself provides an abundance of roots, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and edible fungi, all of which the Pygmy uses. Schebesta gives no details as to the exact proportions of these various foodstuffs consumed, so it is impossible to get any idea of the dietetics of this group. He also mentions the place of snails and grubs, termites and ants, larvae, and certain types of snake in the diet. Fish form only a small part of the diet, but the womenfolk catch crabs and small fish in the shallow streams, using their hands or small nets.

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[NET HUNTERS]

TECHNOLOGY

372 Fire making is totally unknown, even as it is to some of the neighboring village tribes, according to Putnam. Glowing embers wrapped in phrynium leaves are carried everywhere, even on short journeys. They are also used, as described by Schebesta, for light at night and for fighting off invading ants. Another form of light (Fig. 31a), in the shape of resin torches (KiBira: *kasuku*), is sometimes used, but at no time is wood specially cut (such as the *akata* mentioned by Schebesta) to make firebrand torches. Campfires are always made the same way—three logs, their ends pointing to the center, where kindling is placed and where cinders form on which cooking is done.

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411 Poison is used on untipped arrows, as described by Schebesta. These arrows are carefully protected by leaf covers until used. They are much more widely used than the metal-tipped arrows, largely, as the Mbuti admit themselves, because they are such poor shots.

Sometimes spearheads are also untipped, the wooden points being fire-hardened, but there is no evidence that these are poisoned, and they are becoming rare.

462 In none of the normal routine work in a
[463] Pygmy camp such as that described by Putnam
is there any specialization, except in so far as
certain tasks are divided between men and wom-
en.

[P 201-B]

[NET HUNTERS]

224 Putnam describes a ceremony that takes place at that time. A man other than the hunter cuts off a section of the skin, a little at a time, distributing it for all to eat. When he has cut down to the inner wall of the abdomen and everyone has had a piece, he stands aside for the youngest son of the successful hunter to bite through the wall, whereupon the bloated elephant bursts. Putnam says that this ceremony is repugnant to the Pygmies, who dislike raw meat, and particularly repugnant to the child, but he does not explain the practice.

251 Following this ceremony, the animal is
• 252 quickly and completely butchered, and the
261 meat is cooked. The Pygmies eat as much as they can. They partly boil and partly dry some (the only form of preservation of foodstuff ever practiced by them) and take this to the village.

224 In 1951, Putnam gave me another version of this form of hunt, in which the Pygmy thrusts the spear into the bladder of the elephant, and, if he sees that the urine is released, he returns to camp knowing that it will die within a few days. The procedure is then as above. Anne Putnam (1954, 93) mentions a net hunter who tracked and killed an elephant at a time when there was no shortage of food, simply because he felt the urge to do so.

Schebesta (1941, 106 ff.) mentions two types
[P. 207-B]

(TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 208-A)

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 209-B]

the use of poison for catching fish. The poison (KiBira: *matungu*) is prepared from the bark of the *atungo* tree, and has been known to blind people who get it in the eyes. Fish caught by the children are placed by them in leaves with salt and roasted on fire embers. Salt is obtained either from plantain skins, or in the *ido*, which are open, well-watered clearings found in the forest. Children also hunt rats and mice with their miniature bows and arrows.

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GATHERING

As with the archers, gathering is mostly the province of women and children (mainly women), though men will gather any edible food they happen to pass. Gathering is an individual rather than a collective activity. Gathering activities that require the climbing of high trees, such as the collection of most nuts, are undertaken by men, who also collect termites, silkworms, and honey. The contribution of children, though not organized, is appreciable.

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The foods available are the same as those described by Schebesta. It appears that the net hunters make much fuller use of forest products, the most important of which are nuts, edible fungus, and edible roots, each of which can be subdivided into a number of different species, not only insuring a supply at all seasons, for each species has its own season, but also variety.

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[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 209-B]

PLATE 36 ¹/_A

COLLECTING HONEY, EPULU DISTRICT, CENTRAL ITURI

- 222 a. Honey is generally found high in the treetops in the fork of a limb or in a bole. More
462 rarely, it is found in the main trunk a few feet above the ground. Only when the hive is in
412 a fallen trunk on the ground itself do women collect honey; at other times it is exclusively
the work of men and youths. An ax or adze is used to enlarge the opening, the bees are then
smoked out, and the honey is withdrawn by hand.
- 322 b. As with the rest of Mbuti food economy, honey is eaten as gathered, never stored.
262 Comb sections are eaten raw; the liquid is usually warmed over a fire and drunk. If the
• 252 honey contains too much dirt, it is wrapped in leaves and soaked in water which is then
[251] drunk.

1, /Plate 36 appears on page 305--Analyst/
¹/_A

[P. 304]

224 out of that vicinity, however, they keep track of it, and they send out
433 scouts to help them decide the best location for their next hunting
camp.

439 Insofar as the Mbuti are dependent upon the villagers for village
262 foods, thus far are they dependent also for certain items of material
• 252 culture, in metal, pottery and wood. Even so, of the village foods
415 only rice and beans (neither of which can be considered as staples even
* 177 among the villagers) demand pottery or metal cooking vessels. Trade
vessels of aluminum are rapidly replacing all pottery vessels. Manioc,
plantains, corn and peanuts can be roasted, the sweet banana and
peanut can be eaten raw, and manioc can also be eaten without cook-
ing if it is first soaked in cold water for several days.

439 However, in every Mbuti village camp each household will boast at
415 least one metal vessel, and there will be one or two wooden mortars
+ 177 and pestles for common usage. In addition, there is only the metal
knife blade which might be said to be necessary to the Mbuti in their
439 village life, for peeling, scraping and cutting the manioc root, and the
412 metal ax blade needed for cutting the saplings used in the construc-
* 177 tion of either village-type houses or forest-style huts. The technologi-
cal dependence of the Mbuti upon the villagers, in the village, is then
not great, and is directly contingent upon Mbuti dependence upon
village foods in the same context.

325 We shall see that in the forest context, as with food, there is no es-
sential dependence either on materials such as metal, or on skill in
224 working them. It has been argued that the Mbuti hunt is dependent
411 upon metal arrow-points, spear blades, and knife blades. It is not. We
shall see that the Mbuti frequently prefer to use the poisoned arrows
that have only a fire-hardened tip, for sound practical reasons; that
they use the spear primarily for defense rather than offense, and in
any case still retain knowledge of the fire-hardened point and the be-
lief that it is as effective as metal except, possibly, against buffalo and
elephant. Old Mbuti assert that fire-hardened spears are effective even
412 against the largest game. Slit bamboo and slit reeds offer adequate
cutting surfaces, though they dull quickly and are seldom used to-
day; they could, however, successfully replace the metal knife as far
as the forest life of the Mbuti is concerned. There are certain types of
vine that have a highly abrasive surface and can be used for scraping
[322] itaba roots. Of all the village utensils, the two that the Mbuti would
[824] miss the most would be the machete and the ax blade. The machete
is used for cutting the light *fito* saplings that form the framework for

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

[P.108-D]

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4. Mbuti girl helps village woman pound manioc in shade of plantain tree.

THE LIFE CYCLE

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are contradicted every day without necessarily causing any mention, but in the event of anything more serious happening later, the earlier incidents will be recalled and made into an issue that successfully embroils, ultimately, the entire camp.

But more curious than this slight emphasis on normal, or mildly abnormal and trivial patterns is the lack of emphasis at times where one would have thought the occasion to be of major concern to the band. Birth and marriage, for instance, provoke little comment, and concern primarily the nuclear families and not the band. The relationship between these particular attitudes and the nonlinear and fluid composition of the band is plain. The constant movement of families from one band to another, alone, opens up different and important avenues for recruitment that has the advantage of being selective.

With this in mind, let us look first at the daily life of the Mbuti, briefly, for it is of little structural significance, then at the life cycle.

Among both net-hunters and archers five days out of seven are likely to include some hunting. Even though it would be possible for the Mbuti to kill a surplus of game and dry the meat and store it for their own future use, as indeed they do for the benefit of the villagers, such measures are no more to their taste than to their advantage. On a hunting day the family rises at dawn, the mother and her older daughters who are at the age of puberty go to the stream to wash themselves and bring back water for drinking and cooking. The menfolk go to a different part of the stream, and generally slightly later. The older men might be excessively lazy and use the water brought back for drinking as bath water.

While the women cook the light morning meal and set food aside for taking with them on the hunt, the men shake out and inspect their nets, bows and arrows, their sons helping them or simply looking on. If the forest is dry, the hunt may start leaving within an hour of dawn, otherwise it may not leave until midday. Usually it sets off about two hours after sunrise and may return anytime between midday and dusk. There is no particular order for leaving the camp, but the youths usually go ahead, and not far away they light a fire at the base of a small tree, as an invocation to the forest for a good hunt. Men and women alike stop by the fire on their way, but with no ceremony. It does serve, however, as a place for a more cordial exchange of greetings than generally takes place in the still sleepy camp.

Back in the camp some old grandparents, or maybe only a handful

512 of youths, will be left in charge of the camp and of any children that
224 elect to stay behind. Any child old enough to make the decision does
561 so himself. If his parents do not want to be bothered with him he
[855] has a wide range of classificatory mothers and fathers to call on, or if
he is old enough he will simply join his own age group and set off
[462] with them. Girls always go with the women; boys go with their fa-
thers, youths may go with their fathers or on their own. If a father has
a particularly long net he may welcome an extra spear or bow and
arrow nearby, and his adolescent sons serve in this capacity.

224 The hunt is described more fully in Chapter Ten. Here it is only
561 necessary to point out that among the net-hunters, where a net is
476 owned by married men or by extremely rare, gifted bachelor hunters
422 (youths), the hunt effectively divides itself into nuclear family groups
[594] but not into nuclear families, for each family, during the hunt, is it-
self divided by age and sex. The family-owned nets stretch out in a
long semicircle, end to end, and the women act as beaters, forming a
corresponding semicircle opposite. But each net is utterly dependent
on the others, as is each beater, and it is the co-operative aspect of the
age group that is emphasized, rather than the distinctness of each
family. The division of spoils similarly stresses band rather than fam-
ily values, and the hunting songs and dances that take place after,
and sometimes before, the hunt further illustrate that the hunt is
considered an affair of the band as a whole.

224 When the hunt returns to camp there is immediate excitement as
183 those who stayed behind crowd around for tales of all that happened,
and maybe for a few tidbits of raw meat. In the confusion, men and
women alike, but particularly women, may be seen furtively conceal-
ing some of their spoils under the leaves of their roofs, or in empty
pots nearby. For although there will have been some sharing on the
scene, there is always more back in the camp, and family loyalty is
not that subject to band loyalty that there is no cheating.

224 The food is prepared and cooked right away, and while this is be-
535 ing done a hunting dance may take place, in which men and women
[252] and children all take part. This dance is frequently imitative of hunt-
ing activities, with older people taking the part of the animals hunted.

224 Any unusual event of the day's hunt may be reenacted, and this is
535 also an occasion where the sanction of ridicule may be applied to any
626 hunter, male or female, who is considered to have been unsatisfac-
tory. It is not uncommon for a husband to lead a dance ridiculing a
wife who, through her laziness as a beater, spoiled his chances.

THE ECONOMY

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mushrooms, of which there are many edible varieties at any one time throughout the year; the sweet *itaba* and similar roots, which are found by following its telltale vine along the ground, then grubbing with a stick for the roots at the end; nuts, of which there are again many varieties at any time of year; and divers berries. There are also succulent fruits and a few leafy vegetables, though the latter seem rarely used except as herbs. However, they are likened by the Mbuti to the village manioc top, which is cooked as a spinach, and perhaps it is because of the availability of manioc tops and their more pleasant taste that the indigenous vegetable is falling into disuse. [252]

Among the net-hunters, gathering takes place during the course of the net-hunt, on the way to and from the hunt, and between each cast of the nets. Women carry baskets on their backs, with a bark tumpline over their foreheads, as do their young daughters. In the same way that the boys form an age group during the hunt, so do the girls. The boys split into two sections and guard each extremity of their hunting semicircle; likewise the girls split into two groups and beat at each end of the semicircle of beaters. Only the older boys and girls are expected to act as adults, and even they need not necessarily act with their parents. The girls go off on foraging parties on their own, and women go off in twos and threes to do their gathering. There is no recognizable kinship pattern, at least among the Epulu band, to these gathering associations. Women or girls who gather together are likely to be friends of approximately the same age; that is about the only generalization possible. [224] [482] [602]

Men, not having baskets with them, are less able to gather effectively, but if they pass a bank of mushrooms they will pick whatever they can carry without encumbering themselves, and they will send the younger boys back to camp with their arms full.

Gathering, then, is a much more individual affair than hunting among the net-hunters. Even among the archers, where the women are not required on the hunt, they only go off in twos or threes to gather, and the same freedom is allowed for the men to gather whenever they have the opportunity. The spoils are similarly regarded much more as individual property than as communal, though sharing does take place. [422]

There are no rituals and no magic associated with gathering, but insofar as it is primarily a woman's occupation, *elima* songs are frequently sung on gathering expeditions. As with hunting songs, the *elima* songs are designed to attract the attention of the forest deity, [222] [533] [789] [778] [796]

THE ECONOMY

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It is significant that the honey season should be marked among the Mbuti by a special type of song, musically distinct from the other types, and by a ritual dance involving ritual use of fire. I have seen this dance throughout the forest, and heard the same distinctive honey song, the latter being made all the more distinct by the use of special wooden clappers called *ngbengbe* by the net-hunters of the Epulu region, *epopo* or *koko* by the archers further east.

Many different kinds of honey are recognized, and each has its own distinctive taste. All that I tasted were exceptionally sweet except for the *apuma* honey, which is very liquid and highly fermented by the time it is collected late in the season. Most honey is found high up in boles in the upper branches of the tallest trees. This is always collected by men and youths who can climb trees, unless the diameter is too great, simply by exerting lateral pressure on the trunk with their arms while they move their feet up, pulling themselves close to the trunk with a jerk as they move their arms up. If a tree is too wide to climb this way, they may loop a vine around it, holding the ends with their hands, or they may climb a smaller tree nearby and jump across where the branches meet higher up. Hollow trunks or branches are used by bees as hives.

Other honey is found a few feet above ground level, again in a hollow tree trunk, and this is the only kind of honey, except for the rare *sundu*, which is found in the ground, that a woman may collect.

The actual collecting procedure is the same. If the entrance to the hive is small, it has to be widened with an ax. Then a leaf tube in which there are smoldering embers is introduced into the hole, and by blowing through the other end, the Mbuti fills the hive with smoke and drives out the bees. Most of the bees do not sting at all, and those that do sting do not seem to cause any great pain. Even before they have all left the hive the collector puts his arm in and pulls out handfuls of honey, eating it on the spot, sharing it with friends who may be helping him. When they have had their fill they throw down what is left to those waiting below. If by themselves, they fill a special bark honey container or a basket lined with leaves, and bring the rest back to camp. There it is shared by all, either being eaten in the comb or warmed in leaf containers over the fire. If it is full of white maggots it is particularly prized, and will almost certainly be warmed to loosen the honey until the maggots wriggle, at which point it is consumed with relish.

If the honey is very dirty, full of rotten bark or leaf mold, it is wrapped in a leaf container and immersed in water. When it is pulled

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- 262 out the liquid that drains from it (*kombo*) is caught in leaf cups and
• 252 drunk. Never is any honey wasted, never is it kept or used in the preparation of other foods; what is not consumed on the spot is eaten or drunk the moment it is brought back into camp.

261 There is a craving for honey during the season that never seems to
262 be satisfied. No amount of alternative foods, even meat, can reduce
222 this passion for honey. Each band has its own way of listening for
[825] the telltale sound of bees swarming. Among some, a leaf is rubbed between the hands, which are then rubbed across the forehead to enable the hunter to see the bees high up in their hives. I found this practice among the eastern archers. Elsewhere, throughout the net-hunting
[184] region and also among the western archers, at least, the chameleon
[825] (*ameuli*) is believed to lead the Mbuti to honey by uttering a long-drawn-out throaty cry. Chameleons, however, are not known to be
[136] capable of making any such noise, and the noted ornithologist Dr. James Chapin claims to have tracked this weird sound down to the *Sarothrura elegans*, a bird with a skinny pouch in its neck that enables it to give an unbroken wail lasting fifteen seconds or more.

221 But most noticeable among a people who take the success of
222 hunting and gathering so much for granted is the presence of honey-
53 collecting magic, and an inordinate emphasis on song and dance,
789 legend-telling and other recreational activities. There is no doubt that whatever else it may be, the honey season is also a festive season where celebration is the order of the day, even at the cost of a relatively empty stomach.

221 Some activities are purely recreational, such as spinning tops made
222 of nut sections, and gambling with dried seeds thrown on the ground
524 to make up a total number that is a multiple of four. Others are educational, and in particular the honey swing is for training youngsters
[525] in agility at heights, as are the informal contests at climbing dangling
[868] vines. The honey swing is suspended from two high branches, so that it has a long, powerful arc. The youths line up and one jumps into the bend of the vine that forms the seat and sets the swing in motion. As the swing moves backwards, a youth runs forward, catching onto the side of the vine, giving it added momentum. As it carries him off the ground, he throws his legs forward and up over his head and into the swing just as the previous occupant jumps to the ground.

The younger children also play with smaller swings, and they have their own game of climbing saplings until there are so many of them that the young tree bends to the ground. The children then leap to

GOVERNMENT: INTERNAL

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meaningless trivia. Such disputes I have put in a class by themselves, though wherever a deeper underlying dispute was known to have lain behind an apparently trivial dispute, it has been classified accordingly. 252
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DISPUTES CONCERNING FOOD

1. A mortar was borrowed by Njobo's sister, Teningbengé, from Amaloku, Amabosu's wife. There is no kin relationship. Teningbengé's subsequent cooking did not please her son (Maipé, actually her nephew), who complained that the mortar must have been dirty. Amaloku, who by then had retrieved the mortar, said that on the contrary it was the food put into the mortar that was dirty, and not the mortar itself. Maipé promptly seized a log of wood and started fighting with Amabosu. Amaloku and Teningbengé fought with sticks. Amabosu's mother, São, joined the fight, against her daughter-in-law's oldest sister, old Asofalinda. The dispute remained thus confined and was watched with much enthusiasm and laughter by the rest of the camp until Ekianga, brother to Amaloku and Asofalinda, stepped in and stopped the fighting by seizing the sticks and logs and throwing them away. Everyone returned to his hut and continued the evening meal. 252
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2. Masisi, a great hunter, complained that the hunting was bad and said the band should move to the village and eat there. His cousin, Manyalibo, moved to midcamp and began a tirade against Masisi and everyone else for always complaining there was not enough food. He cited ten antelope caught that morning as evidence of the good hunting, and said that everyone should be happy and should be making the forest happy by singing, with so much food. And if they wanted more food they should hunt more and make the hunt even better. He said that if Masisi's noise continued he was going to leave. 224
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Moké then took his place and quietly told everyone that nobody should leave for anywhere, that nobody could deny that the hunt was reasonably good, and that therefore the forest was pleased. If they moved or made too much noise it would be displeased. The forest would be happy if the whole band were to set out the next day on the biggest hunt of all. Then when the weather was better (it had been raining for some days, always a cause of discontent and discomfort) and nobody was making a noise, the whole band could move wherever it liked (knowing that in such a mood it would move fur- 224
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[412] 21. A young Mbuti mother, sitting on a log, prepares mushrooms, using a village
[439] knife. Another such knife lies across her left foot. It is probably the most widely
used utensil for which the Mbuti are dependent upon the villagers, though still
not indispensable.

593 persistence in sleeping with Amabosu's sister despite her having just
578 given birth to a child. She evidently felt shame for her brother, but
whatever the reason she did not fight back. This only enraged Ama-
bosu further so that his beatings grew to the point where Amaloku
was bruised and lame and perpetually in tears. After a week of this
593 the band was well aware of the underlying cause, but it was nonethe-
578 less concerned for the restoration of good relations between Amabosu
622 and his wife. Being outwardly a domestic squabble, nobody inter-
fered, and the camp was silent. The silence was very real, as it can
be when the Mbuti get moody, and it settled on the whole camp the
moment each beating began. Masisi tried to create minor disputes
about hunting, in the hope that Amabosu and his wife would join in,
but they were not to be drawn so easily. Even when one very real
[685] dispute raged beside them (Pepei having stolen some meat from Sau,
Amabosu's mother) they maintained a sullen silence that overcame
the band as soon as Pepei had been dealt with by a sound beating.

It was not until Amaloku, in an effort to run away from Amabosu,
tripped and fell by Tungana's hearth that the camp had its chance.
• [252] As she tripped, Amaloku scattered several logs from the fire, upsetting
a piece of meat that had been roasting over the coals, casting it into
the ashes. Old Tungana let out a yell and his wife slapped Amaloku
hard. Amaloku wailed as she had never wailed before, whereupon
Masisi and Manyalibo, both great hunters, went to the middle of the
camp and jointly denounced Amaloku as a troublesome girl who
should be sent back to her people. She had been badly taught, be-
[372] cause no Mbuti ever treats fire like that, or throws food into fire. She
was no good as a daughter, no good in camp, and evidently no good
in bed because she was still without child.

This utterly unjustified and personal attack brought out not only
Amabosu but also Ekianga (Amaloku's brother, the basic cause of
all the trouble) in common defense of the weeping girl. Masisi and
[372] Manyalibo put up a good argument, for it was indeed considered bad
to accidentally step into a fire, and the camp was soon in an uproar
with the sister-exchange section uniting in defense, supported largely
by the youths. The hunters, with the exception of Ekianga and Ama-
bosu themselves, allied with Masisi and Manyalibo. Finally old
[198] Tungana stopped everything by whistling and then making one of his
rare speeches. It was to the effect that everyone was behaving like
[186] villagers, so he might as well go to the village and stay there. He called
to his wife to pack her things, and grumbling loudly he grabbed his

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

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A Pygmy woman (right) helps a villager pound locally grown rice.

[P. 72-K]

THE SONG OF THE FOREST

no longer worried me that the trumpet was a metal drainpipe instead of a piece of bamboo or wood, because now that I could not see it I realized that Ausu was right. It was the sound that mattered. As the men sang in the camp, the voice of the molimo echoed their song, moving about continually so that it seemed to be everywhere at once. During a lull in the singing it started giving animal growls, and the men looked around to make sure that all the women were safely in their huts. Almost immediately Amabosu and Madyadya came running into the camp from the far end, past Cephu's camp, picking their feet up high in the air so that more than ever they seemed to be floating above the ground they trod. They came right up to the fire and squatted down either side of it, the front of the trumpet still held on Madyadya's shoulder as Amabosu warbled softly into the other end. 765 533 534 [481]

I noticed that the trumpet was still wet; it must have been given a "drink" just before it was carried into the camp. Now both youths stood up, and with Amabosu singing all the time, in reply to the song of the men, Madyadya took the end of the trumpet in his hands and waved it up and down, passing it through the flames of the molimo fire and over the heads of all of us sitting there. Some of the men took up hot ashes and rubbed them over the trumpet, and some even put live coals in at the far end. As Amabosu sang harder and louder, sparks flew out over Madyadya's shoulder, disappearing into the night with the song. 765 534 372 [533]

Then the two of them went dancing off, around the camp once and into the forest. There were a few last defiant bellows from the direction of the river, and no more was heard. The men stopped singing and prepared to eat. Two caldrons had been boiling over the fire, and both were now ready. One contained rice, the other a kind of spinach made from the leaves of the manioc plant. Eaten together they are delicious. I wondered if there would be any precedence as to who should eat first, or if there would be any ritual, but there 765 534 264 [252] [262]

THE CRIME OF CEPHU

to cook the morning meal. Back in the camp they sat outside their huts, legs straight out in front of them in what seemed the most uncomfortable position possible. From there they prepared the family repast, placing green plantains in the hot ashes to roast, or concocting a stew of mushrooms and chopped leaves with whatever meat was left over from the day before, covering the pot with large leaves to trap the steam and to keep out ashes and dirt. Any little chores that had to be done were done by their daughters, who scurried around collecting dry twigs to heat the fire up more quickly, or sat over the fire with their baby brothers, carefully guarding the pot and making sure it did not upset when the burning wood subsided. The younger women, freed in this way, relaxed and set to work making themselves beautiful. They sat in full view of the camp, unashamedly painting their bodies with black paste, calling their friends over to help with the more inaccessible regions. The buttocks in particular they found difficult to paint themselves, and rather than waste such an expansive area they would either bend over in front of a friend, or lie across her lap. 512 [516] 512 252 • [593] [259]

The men combined business with pleasure too, usually meeting at the kumamolimo to drink from a steaming bowl of liko. The young bachelors mostly cooked their own simple breakfast here, and together they all discussed the day ahead of them—where they should go to hunt, what they might expect to find. Cephu never came over from his little camp at such times. He merely waited until all the others set off for the hunt, then he joined them. 512 [272] [264] [589]

The men also had to prepare their nets. Helping one another, they uncoiled long lengths of knotted twine, sometimes stretching for three hundred feet, inspecting every section with care. Then, standing upright, the assistant holding the net off the ground, each man coiled his net again so that it hung from one shoulder to within a few inches of his ankle. With a loose length of twine he deftly bound the coils together, gave the net a final shake and hung it from 224 476 286

THE FOREST PEOPLE

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593 the first of Ekianga's huts, the largest and the best, built by himself
595 and Kamaikan. Amabosu was sitting down at his fire at the time,
853 and his wife was sitting near him, peeling mushrooms for the evening
598 meal. Ekianga was inside the hut with Kamaikan, who had given the
• [252] baby to her old mother, Sau, to look after for a few hours. At first
Amabosu's remarks brought no response from the closed hut. But he
became more and more explicit, denouncing Ekianga's shame in con-
siderable and intimate detail, hinting that what was going on inside
the hut at that moment was precisely what every new mother should
avoid if she was to be able to look after the baby properly and give
it lots of milk.

593 At last Ekianga retorted angrily from inside the hut. Amabosu
595 continued to sit quietly, staring into the fire, with his wide, strange
411 eyes. He answered in as caustic tones as he could find. In the end,
598 Ekianga's door burst open and Ekianga appeared, spear in hand. He
607 looked wild with fury and shame, and he flexed his muscles and
hurled the spear at Amabosu with all his might. Amabosu looked up
from the fire for the first time, but sat perfectly still with not a flicker
of emotion on his face, his eyes still wide and cold and staring. The
spear struck the ground within twelve inches of his feet, which was
probably exactly where it had been intended to land. Amabosu
calmly rose, pulled the spear free, and tossed it behind his hut into
the rubbish dump. This was just about as insulting a gesture as he
could have made at that moment, and it started one of the most dra-
matic fights I have seen in a Pygmy camp, and one of the most com-
plicated.

593 As long as it was between the two men all was well, but the wives
595 were torn between their loyalties as wives and as sisters. Amabosu's
598 wife entered the fray by swearing at her husband for throwing her
607 brother's spear into the rubbish dump. Amabosu countered by smack-
ing her firmly across the face. Normally Ekianga would have ap-
proved of such manly assertion of authority over a disloyal wife, but as

THE WORLD OF THE VILLAGE

something to eat." He gave Hari's sister a playful push on the head, then lay back and seemed to go to sleep. P
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Hari led us out and into the long triangular hut. We went right through to the back and there, on each side, was a narrow bed of sticks. Here, he said, Kenge and I were to sleep. This was the visitors' hut, he exclaimed. He and his sister slept in Kaweki's house. I asked who the visitors were, as Kaweki was reputed to have none. "Oh, I don't mean villagers," Hari said. "I mean Pygmies, his friends." P
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I had barely washed and sat down in the middle of the clearing to eat the food prepared by Hari's sister, when there was the unmistakable sound of a band of Pygmies approaching. In a few minutes a score of them burst into the clearing—young men and women, laughing and shouting their greetings. P
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They said that they had heard that Kaweki was ill, so they had come to hunt for him and make him well. What had promised to be a peaceful rest in a lazy fishing camp now threatened to be something very different. These Pygmies had come as far as we had, but within minutes of arrival they were off again for a quick hunt before the sun set. Kenge himself joined them, taking Kaweki's two hunting dogs and arming himself with a stout short-shafted spear. The women stayed behind to improvise some shelter for the night. But they decided it was too much work, so they just added some sticks and leaves to the visitors' hut, forming an elongated windbreak that reached almost over to Kaweki's house. By the time the men came back, empty-handed, they had installed themselves and were boiling pots of plantains and manioc, together with fish to which they had helped themselves from Kaweki's rack. That night those who could not squeeze into the shelters or into the overcrowded visitors' hut slept in Kaweki's house. I myself found that the longed-for blessing of sleep did not come easily. Kenge had, of course, found an old girl friend among the newcomers, and the two of them lay together, P
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